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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GUATEMALA 000955

SIPDIS

HARARE FOR BRUCE WHARTON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [CU](#) [GT](#) [UNCHR](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY CALLS ON RULING PARTY TO URGE PORTILLO TO SUPPORT CUBA CHR RESOLUTION

Classified By: PolCouns David Lindwall for reason 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (U) On April 9, the Guatemalan Congress passed an unscheduled resolution calling on President Portillo to abstain in the upcoming UNCHR resolution on Cuba. Only one independent congressman, Emilio Saca, voted against the measure, saying that the Government of Cuba should be censured for its deplorable human rights situation.

12. (SBU) On instruction from the Ambassador, PolCouns met on April 10 with the Congressional leadership of the ruling party (the FRG - Frente Republicano Guatemalteco) to express our disappointment with the Congressional resolution and to urge them to take a principled position in support of the jailed human rights activists, journalists, labor leaders and other dissidents in Cuba. Present for the FRG were First Vice President of Congress Carlos Hernandez, Third Vice President Jorge Arevalo and Majority Leader Aristides Crespo. PolCouns relayed the details of the recent arrest and summary trial of the dissidents, noted by name many of the dissidents who are personally known to Ambassador Hamilton, and argued that these individuals deserved the support of all freedom-loving Latin Americans. They had been arrested and summarily tried in kangaroo courts for exercising the most basic human rights that all Guatemalans enjoy and that are strongly defended in Guatemala by the FRG. It was unconscionable that only Guatemalan labor leaders had spoken out in the defense of the dissidents, and an abstention on the UNCHR resolution on Cuba would only convince the GOC that it had friends that were prepared to support it irrespective of its deplorable behavior. PolCouns asked them how the FRG viewed the arrest of the dissidents.

13. (SBU) Aristides Crespo responded that the arrest appeared to be an injustice, but said that counter-narcotics decertification of Guatemala by the USG was also viewed as an injustice by them. He said that many believed that it had been done expressly to hurt the FRG in the upcoming elections, and that the FRG believed that decertification was unmerited. He argued that if the USG wanted greater cooperation on drugs from a poor country like Guatemala, it needed to provide greater financial support to the effort. PolCouns noted that since decertification the GOG had accomplished several significant successes in the war on drugs, in cooperation with us, but without new resources. We are pleased with the increase in counter-narcotics cooperation and are prepared to continue providing all the support possible. However, the issue of supporting the Cuban dissidents should be an issue of principle, not of bilateral differences with us. The FRG is known as a party of strong principles, and we know that they support the principles of free speech and free association for which the Cuban dissidents were arrested and sentenced to long terms. Surely the FRG would find these principles much closer to their own than the principles employed by the Cuban Government in arresting these people.

14. (SBU) PolCouns asked if they had seen the draft Cuba resolution tabled in Geneva by Costa Rica, Uruguay and Peru. When they acknowledged they had not, PolCouns gave them a copy and noted that it simply called for Cuba to allow the visit of the UNCHR's Special Representative. The UNCHR has sent Special Representatives to Guatemala many times, and the GOG has always welcomed them. It is difficult for us to understand why an FRG government would not vote in favor of this resolution, as Guatemala certainly believes that all governments should meet the same human rights standards that have been applied here.

15. (SBU) Crespo noted that, despite the Congressional resolution, the decision on the Cuba vote is entirely the Executive's. When pressed, he acknowledged that they did have some influence on the vote, and said they would relay our request to the senior party leadership (i.e. President of Congress Rios Montt).

16. (C) Comment: The Congressional vote of April 9 may well have been a face-saving move by the FRG to give Portillo cover with the Cubans to abstain on the vote, vice the "no" vote the Cubans had hoped for. The linkage between not supporting us on Cuba and the recent decertification of Guatemala for counter-narcotics cooperation, naked as it is,

has been made to us repeatedly by MFA interlocutors. The Ambassador's continuing efforts to portray support for the Cuban dissidents as an issue of principle is a hard one for the Guatemalans to argue against, and is beginning to crack Guatemalan determination to "pass us the bill" for decertifying Guatemala. We will continue to press this issue publicly and privately on all fronts in the lead-up to the vote.

HAMILTON